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A
SERMON
Preach'd in Lambeth Chapel,
AT THE
CONSECRATION
OF THE

Right Reverend Fathers in God
OF SPRING,
Lord Bishop of **EXETER,**
AND
CHARLES
Lord Bishop of **NORWICH,**

On Sunday Feb. 8. 1707.

By Samuel Bradford, D. D. Rector of St. Mary le-
Bow, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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To the Most Reverend Father in God, **THOMAS** by Divine Providence Lord Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*, Primate of all *England*, and Metropolitan.

May it please Your Grace,

TO receive favourably a Sermon Preach'd in your Chapel, and by Order of my Lords the Bishops, who by Your Graces Commission perform'd the Sacred Office of Consecration, now Publish'd. That it may please Almighty God to re-establish your Graces Health, and to prolong your Life, is the devout Prayer of all the true Friends of the Establish'd Church, and particularly of him who is both in Duty and Gratitude,

My Lord,

Your Graces Humble

And Obedient Servant,

SAMUEL BRADFORD.

Ephesians iv. 11, 12, 13.

He gave some, Apostles, and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ.

THE occasion of these Words was this: St. Paul had been exhorting the *Ephesians*, in a very pathetic manner, *to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith* * *they were called*, particularly that they should exercise Christian Humility and Charity, and live in perfect Peace and Unity †. For the enforcing of which Exhortation, he mentions the several Bands, by which Christians were United; that there was one Body and one Spirit ||, that they were call'd in one Hope of their Calling *, that there was one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism †, one God and Father of all, who was above all, and through all, and in them all ||. And whereas there were different Gifts and Offices in the Church, whereby some might be tempted to despise or envy others, and so might fall into Contention and Division, he tells them, that these differences of Gifts and Offices were design'd by him who Bestow'd and Appointed them, and did in the very Nature of them tend directly to the Uniting and Edifying of the whole Body. *Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ* *, who according to the Prediction of a Prophetical Psalm, *when he ascended up on high, gave Gifts unto Men* †, ascending to this very purpose, *that he might fill all things* ||, and all places, with his Presence and Influence, and Particularly that becoming the Head of his Body, the Church, he might fill this his Body with the Influences of his Divine Spirit, to which end, as it follows in my Text, *he gave some, Apostles, &c.* In which words the four following Particulars are worthy to be consider'd.

* Verse 1, † 2, 3. || 4. * 5. † 6. || 7. * 8. † 10.
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I. The several distinct Officers appointed in the Church of Christ.

II. The Person by whom, or by whose Authority, they were appointed.

III. The Business, or Work, which was committed to them.

IV. The great design and end of their Institution.

The giving a brief Account of these particulars, and applying them to the occasion of the present Solemnity, is that which I design in my following Discourse.

I. The several distinct Officers appointed in the Church of Christ. They are rank'd under the following Heads; *Apostles*; *Prophets*; *Evangelists*; *Pastors and Teachers*.

That by *Apostles* is to be understood those Eleven Persons who had been chosen by our Lord in the time of his Life, and receiv'd a particular Commission from him after his Resurrection from the Dead, together with St. *Matthias* chosen in the room of the Traytor *Judas*, and St. *Paul* appointed by our Lord in a Vision from Heaven, there can be no doubt. These were Persons sent forth by our Saviour, as he was by his Father: and their Business was to be Witnesses of his Resurrection, in his Name to Preach the Gospel to all the World, to gather a Church out of the rest of Mankind, and to direct and govern it by his Authority, and under the immediate and miraculous Conduct of his Spirit.

By *Prophets* is as plainly meant those, who receiving an extraordinary measure of the Spirit were thereby qualified to interpret the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, and to Preach the Gospel to such as should embrace the Christian Faith.

By *Evangelists*, St. *Paul* signifies, not so much those who wrote the Gospel, whom we do now particularly distinguish by that Title, as those who were sent abroad by the *Apostles* to assist them in Publishing the Gospel to the World.

Finally, By *Pastors and Teachers*, I understand the stated Officers settled in every Church, as the ordinary and constant Guides and Governours thereof. Where 'tis observable, that the *Apostle* joins *Pastors and Teachers* together, denoting that the Offices imply'd in those Words belong to one and the same Person. For altho' there might be *Teachers* which were not *Pastors* of the Church, such as for Instance *Philip the Evangelist* *; yet every *Pastor* was oblig'd, by Virtue of his Office, to Teach and Instruct the Souls committed to his Care. They were, in the Phrase of our Apostle elsewhere, *to feed* (that is to instruct and govern) *the Church of God* †, with the over-

* *Acts* 21. 8. † *Acts* 20. 28.

fight of which they were Intrusted, and this in his Name, and in subordination to him, who is in the most eminent Sense, *the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls* *.

From this brief Account of the Persons here named by the Apostle, it appears, that he makes mention both of the Extraordinary and the Ordinary Officers of Christ's Church; those who were appointed only, or chiefly, for the first planting of Christianity, together with those who were to be the standing Officers in this Body to the end of all things. The *Apostles*, *Prophets*, and *Evangelists*, I take to be of the former kind; the *Pastors* and *Teachers*, of the latter. Where, when I affirm the three former to be Extraordinary, I do not mean that the *Apostles* were altogether such. They were indeed with respect to some parts of their Office Extraordinary, and consequently but Temporary, viz. As they were chosen by our Lord himself, and sent by him to be Witnesses to the World of what they themselves had heard and seen, particularly of that Great and Fundamental Doctrine, his Resurrection from the Dead; as they were to lay the Foundation of the Christian Church; and as they were extraordinarily inspir'd and qualified for the discharge of these parts of their Function. But then as they were *Pastors*, that is, *Guides* and *Governours* of the Church, and in that Office to be Succeeded by *Bishops*, their Function may be justly reckon'd among the standing Offices design'd to continue as long as the Church should need to be guided and governed. Which may be fairly assign'd as the reason why St. Paul, when he names the standing Officers, mentions only *Pastors* and *Teachers*, including in those general Denominations both *Bishops* and *Presbyters*, the former of which were sufficiently signified under the Title of *Apostles*, whose Authority in presiding over the Church, and over the inferiour *Pastors* and *Teachers* of it, was to be transferr'd to the *Bishops* in every Church which should be planted and settled by them.

If it be said, That here is no mention of *Deacons*, and consequently that all the ordinary and Standing Ministers of the Church are not here named, 'tis enough to observe, That if *Deacons* are not included in the Word *Teachers*, they being frequently allow'd by the *Bishops* to execute that part of their Ministration; they are omitted, (which I rather take to be the case) because the *Apostles* design was not to name every standing Officer, but only the most Eminent, those to whom the care of the Church was principally committed, who were not only *Teachers*, but *Pastors* also.

* 1 Pet. 2. 25.

Before I pass from this Head, I crave leave to make two short Observations from what has been said upon it.

The first is this; That in this Enumeration of the Officers appointed by Christ, there is not the least hint, nor I think any where else in the Holy Scriptures, of any disparity in the Authority and Power of the *Apostles*. The *Apostles*, without preferring one before another, are continually spoken of as the prime Governours of the Church, under Christ the Head of it, and this by a joint Authority, and a Commission of equal Extent. And accordingly the House of God is said to be *Built on the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*, * without distinguishing one Apostle from another, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone*. Which I the rather mention, not only in opposition to the extravagant Pretence of the Church of *Rome*, in making *St. Peter* the Prince of the Apostles, and giving to his Successors in the *Roman See* a Supremacy over all the Bishops in the Church; but also on account of the Fancy of a late Writer †, who in Contradiction indeed to the *Romanists*, but not at all to the Service of the Episcopal Cause, substitutes *St. James*, the Bishop of *Jerusalem*, and the Kinsman of our Saviour, in the room of *St. Peter*. He would persuade us, that the first Regimen of the Catholick Church was Monarchical, that not only *St. James* was the Center of Union, but that as long as there were to be found any Disciples of our Saviour's Family, they did, and would have succeeded in the same Dignity; but that Line failing, the Authority of the Bishop of *Jerusalem* devolv'd upon the Bishops of the several Churches, who were equally partakers of it, and thenceforward the Government of the Church became Aristocratical. There is in truth so little appearance of Argument for the support of this Imagination, that it needs not elaborately to be refuted. It may suffice to say, That as it has no solid Foundation in the Writings of the *New Testament*, so I am perswaded that our Apostle, who says of himself, that *He was in nothing behind the very chiefest Apostles* ‡; and elsewhere, that *Henceforth they knew no Man after the Flesh*, and that *tho' they had known Christ after the Flesh, yet now henceforth they knew him no more* *, had no thought of any peculiar Authority delegated to *St. James*, or to any other of our Saviour's Kinsmen, above that of their Brethren Apostles. The fault of this Hypothesis, besides that of its wanting just proof, is, that it takes off *Episcopacy* from its true and ancient Foundation, upon which it

* *Eph.* 2. 20. † Vid. Mr. *Dodwell's Paraneis ad Euteros*, p. 15, &c. ‡ *2 Cor.* 12. 11. * *2 Cor.* 5. 16.

has hitherto firmly stood, namely, that of an Authority and Power imparted by our Lord to his Apostles equally, and by them deriv'd to the Bishops as their Successors, and assigns to it a later Original and Establishment.

The other Observation I would make is this, That altho' there was no Inequality in the Authority of the Apostles; yet from the very Foundation of the Church there was an Inequality amongst its Pastors. The Apostles are here, and elsewhere constantly mentioned as Superior to all others, and this by the appointment of our Lord himself, *who gave some, Apostles*, in the first place; and we have very plain Instances in the Writings of the Apostles, of different degrees of Authority and Power communicated from them to others. Witness the case of *Timothy* and *Titus*, who were appointed by *St. Paul*, not only to direct and govern the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete*, but in particular to *Ordain Elders* amongst them, and to exercise Authority over the Elders themselves. The attestation to this Truth drawn from the *Angels* of the Seven Churches *, mention'd in the *Revelations* of *St. John*, is undeniable; understanding by those *Angels*, as is highly reasonable, the Bishops of those Churches; amongst which, if *Polycarp* where the *Angel* of the Church of *Smyrna*, as there is reason to believe that he was, 'tis well known what sort of Bishop he was, even such as the Friends of that Order contend for; one to whom all the *Presbyters* of the Church of *Smyrna* were Inferior. And in truth, were there no particular and express Testimonies to be found in Sacred Writ, yet the plain and certain Account which we have of the distinction of *Bishops* and *Presbyters*, as Superior and Inferior Officers in the several Churches planted by the Apostles of which we have any History, even down successively from their Times, is of it self a Testimony so very clear, that 'tis hard to conceive how any that are not Slaves to an Hypothesis, should withstand the force of it, so as ever to bring that matter into farther debate. But I proceed to the next Particular to be Considered in my Text, *viz.*

II. The Person by whom, or by whose Authority these several Officers were appointed. *He gave, &c. He*, who according to the precedeing Verses, *Descended first* into this lower Region, and afterwards *Ascended far above all Heavens, that he might fill all things. He*, who being glorify'd at God's right Hand, became there the Head of the Church, and from thence sent down that Divine Spirit, who was to enliven his Body, and in a more especial manner to guide and assist those whom he

* Rev. I, 20.

appointed to direct and govern the rest of his Members. Some of these our Lord himself chose out and appointed, whilst he was upon Earth, namely, the *Apostles*, together with the seventy Disciples. Others he mark'd out, after his Ascension into Heaven, by conferring upon them singular Gifts of the *Holy-Ghost*, particularly the *Prophets* mention'd in my Text. Others were call'd and appointed by the *Apostles*, who, acting by our Lord's Authority, and by a special Commission from him, and being extraordinarily qualified by a Divine Inspiration to Execute their Commission, those whom they appointed might as truly be said to be given by *Christ*, as those whom he had call'd by Name. Such were the *Evangelists*, together with the *Pastors* and *Teachers* here spoken of, particularly those principal *Pastors*, the *Bishops*, whom the *Apostles*, before their leaving the World, settled in the Churches which they had founded, to succeed them in presiding over all others.

But it will not be needful to enlarge on this Head; it may suffice only to observe from it, how Sacred the Institution of a Ministry in the Church is. It was our Lord who gave, not only *Apostles*, *Prophets*, and *Evangelists*; but also *Pastors* and *Teachers*, as a settled and standing Ministry, and this by Virtue of that Authority and Power, which he ascended into Heaven to Exercise. He himself is the chief *Pastor* and *Bishop* of Souls, and these are given by him, to officiate in his Name, and by his Authority. As the Church of Christ is not such a *Voluntary Society*, as that the Members of it lie under no Obligation to associate, and to hold Communion with each other; so neither are those who Minister to our Lord in his Church subject to the arbitrary Appointment of the People, either to be set up, or deposed at their Pleasure; but as they were given by our Lord at first, so having been once Dedicated to the Service of Christ in his Church, they cannot without Sacrilege alienate themselves, nor without great Contempt of a Divine Institution be arbitrarily alienated by any other.

I mean not hereby to exempt any Man from the just Authority of his Superiors, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil. For as it is the Duty of the chief Pastors of the Church to inflict upon those that are under them such spiritual Censures, as by Offences committed against the Rules of the Gospel they may justly incur; so it is equally the Duty of Civil Governours to Restrain and Punish, by the Authority committed to them, Persons of what Rank or Order soever, that shall demean themselves Injuriouly or Unworthily towards the State; all which is exactly agreeable to the *Articles* of our Church, which assert, that the *Queen's Majesty* hath the chief Power in this Realm,
and

and other ben Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates—whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all Causes, doth appertain. And again it is said to be the Prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in Holy Scriptures, by God himself, that they should rule all Estates and Degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil Sword the stubborn and evil Doers*.

All therefore that I intend to assert in this case is, what is very evident both from sacred Writ, and from the constant practice of the most pure and primitive Ages of Christianity, that the Authority by which the Officers of the Christian Church exercise their respective Functions in that Body, was neither at the first given, nor can be taken away, by the arbitrary will and pleasure of Men; but that as it was deriv'd from our Lord, so it is to be continued and exercis'd in his Name. But the sacredness of the Christian Ministry will yet farther appear from the next particular which my Text lays before us, viz.

III. The Business, or Work Committed to these Officers of the Christian Church, which is thus express, *For the Perfecting of the Saints, the Work of the Ministry, the Edifying of the Body of Christ.* By *Perfecting of the Saints*, I understand, according to St. Paul's use of a like Word elsewhere, the gathering together and joining of Christians into One Body, or Society †. By *the Work of the Ministry*, is plainly meant the Administration of the Word and Sacraments. And by *Edifying of the Body of Christ*, the constant Improvement of the Members of that Body, in Christian Faith, Temper, and Practice. The Ministry of the Word and Sacraments is indeed the means whereby the other Two Parts of their Work are perform'd. 'Tis by publishing the Doctrine of the Gospel, that Men are at first prevail'd upon to embrace the Christian Faith, and to become Members of the Body of Christ. 'Tis by constant preaching of the same Word in the Assemblies of Christians, and applying it as there is occasion in private for their Instruction, Reproof, Admonition and Comfort, that the Body of Christ is edified. 'Tis by the Sacrament of Baptism that those who Embrace the Christian Faith are incorporated into One Body; and 'tis by the other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that they maintain Communion with Christ as the Head, and with each other as fellow-Members of the same Body.

And from this Account it will be easie to infer the true

* Art. 37. † 1 Cor. 9. 16.

Boundaries between that Authority and Power which truly belong to the Church, and that which the State of right challenges, and to shew that there is no interfering between them, no such *Imperium in imperio* as can be charged with limiting and endangering the just Authority of the Civil Magistrate, as is all along falsely and very maliciously insinuated by a late Author *.

That our Lord hath committed to proper Officers *the Work of the Ministry, for the Perfecting of the Saints, and for the Edifying of his Body*, is very expressly asserted by our Apostle, and is the constant Doctrine of the New Testament. When our Lord gave to his Apostles their Commission, it was in such Terms as these, *Go and disciple all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have Commanded you* ||. And again, *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature* †. And once more, *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd* ‡. Those who had been thus Commission'd, ordain'd others to succeed them in *the Work of the Ministry*, requiring them, as St. Paul expressly charges *Timothy*, *To commit the things which they had heard of them to Faithful Men, who should be able to Teach others also* *, which Precept how it was to be understood, viz. That there should be a Perpetual Succession of Men set apart for *the Work of the Ministry*, and consecrated to that Service by Prayer and imposition of hands, is undoubtedly evident, both from divers other directions in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, and from the universal and constant practice of the Church down from that time. For altho', as has been already observ'd, there were some particulars in the Apostolical Function, which were extraordinary, namely such as were necessary for the first planting of Christianity, for which they were qualified by Gifts as extraordinary as their Work; yet, as my Text asserts, all true *Pastors and Teachers* of the Church are also given by Christ for the Work here specified. They are obliged by their Office to preach the Doctrine of Christ wheresoever they have Opportunity, and particularly in that part of the Church in which by Providence they shall be placed, and *Woe be to them* † if they do it not. They are bound to receive into the Church by Bap-

* V. *Rights of the christian Church*, || *Mat.* 28. 19, 20.
 † *Mark* 16. 15. ‡ *John* 20. 21, 22, 23. * 2 *Tim.* 2. 2.
 † 1 *Cor.* 9. 16.

tism such as shall profess to believe in *Jesus Christ*, and to submit to his Precepts, and hereby to admit them into a state of forgiveness of Sins. They are bound to hold Assemblies for Divine Worship, according to the Institution of our Lord by his Apostles, and the constant practice of them and their Followers. In those Assemblies they are obliged to offer up the Praises and Prayers of the Church, to preach the Word of Christ, and to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the Members of their respective Congregations, and thereby to continue them, if they really are what they profess to be, in a state of remission. And forasmuch as this is their peculiar Business, they must be allow'd to judge whose Sins they shall remit, and whose they shall retain; that is, whom they shall receive into the Church by Baptism, and continue in it by administering to them the other Sacrament; and to whom they shall prohibit the use either of the one or the other. In a Word, they are obliged to preside over, to direct, to admonish, to comfort, to rebuke and censure all that are under their charge, according to the directions of God's word. And for all this, if they cherish and excite that good Spirit which is promis'd to all the living Members of Christ's Body, if they *stir up the gift of God which is in them by the laying on of hands**, when they are dedicated to any spiritual Office, they will find themselves sufficiently qualified by him, who hath promis'd to be *always with them*†. This I take to be the sum of that spiritual Authority which is confer'd upon the Ministers of Christ's Church, and belongs to them only; and this, whether the civil State be Christian or Pagan. For the conversion of a Nation to Christianity does not at all alter the case. The Church is still a *distinct*, tho' not a *separate* Society, from the christian Nation. It has its proper Officers, and they their proper Work, which appertains not to the civil Magistrate; but is still peculiar to them as it was before.

Nor is this in the least injurious or derogatory to the Civil Power, because that remains as entire as it was before the Nation became Christian. The Ministers, as well as the Members of the Church, are equally subject to the State, as they were before their Conversion. If they keep within the limits of their Spiritual Functions, instead of injuring the State, they will be eminently Serviceable to it, binding all those Duties upon the Consciences of Men, which otherwise would be perform'd no longer than Fear or Interest requir'd. If the Ministers, or Members of the Church exceed their due

* 2 Tim. 1. 6. † Mat. 28. 20.

bounds, to the prejudice or offence of the State, they are as liable to Censure and Punishment from the Magistrate, as any other Subjects are. If the State confer upon them any Powers or Privileges not belonging to their Spiritual Functions, as they are capable of them, together with the rest of their Fellow-Subjects, so their being again depriv'd of them would not necessarily incapacitate them for their Spiritual Employments. Should any State take upon it to forbid them the Exercise of their Spiritual Power, without any just Offence given to the Government, tho' such a State might call it self Christian, yet in such case the Church with its Officers, must reckon themselves in a persecuted Condition, as really as if they were under a Pagan Magistracy, and must honestly and conscientiously discharge their Duty, patiently submitting to such hard usage as they should be expos'd to on that account. And this again is perfectly agreeable with the Doctrine of our Church, in the Article I mention'd before, in which it is declared, *That where we attribute to the Queen's Majesty the chief Government, we give not to our Princes the Ministering either of God's Word or Sacraments, &c.*

We of this Church had indeed the special Privilege and Happiness, in our Reformation from the Corruptions of Popery, that the Civil Power was forward and zealous in the Work, and whatsoever was done in it, was with its full Consent. Had it been otherwise, it had been nevertheless the Duty of our Church to have broken off from the Roman Communion, and to have reform'd it self; and in that case the distinction of the two Societies, *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical*, would have very plainly appear'd: But since it did reform with the approbation, and by the assistance of the Civil Powers, the distinction is no less real, howsoever less Visible it may be to some sort of Men.

I shall only add, That as the Civil Power, particularly where it is Christian, is always under an Obligation of Conscience to favour and protect the Spiritual keeping within its due Bounds; so the Church is always under the like Obligation to pay all due regard to the Civil Power, never willingly to give the least offence or suspicion; but on the contrary gratefully to acknowledge the Benefits it receives from it, heartily to pray for, and to promote its Welfare, to comply with it in all instances that are not inconsistent with the Laws of its Great Legislator our blessed Redeemer, and where at any time it cannot comply, still quietly and patiently to submit to its Censures. In a word, where the Church and State are both truly Christian, the civil and spiritual Authority will be so far from interfering with each other, that they will unanimously conspire to promote the

the honour of God, the interest of Christianity, and the good of the whole Community. But I proceed to the last particular contain'd in my Text, viz.

IV. The great design and end of this Institution of the Officers mention'd in it, and of the Work in which they are employ'd, express'd in those words, *till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*; that is, till all the particular and genuine Members of Christ's Body arrive at that degree of Christian faith and knowledge together with a suitable temper and practice, which will render them perfect Christians, and will fortify and establish them against all the attempts of such as would seduce or corrupt them, that we may be Men, and *no more Children* *, as it follows, *tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, but speaking the truth in love we may grow up into him in all things who is the Head, even Christ* †. And this, till the whole Body of Christ, *Jews and Gentiles* incorporated, be come to its full age and stature, even to that fulness which is by our Lord designed for it. For thus again our Apostle represents this matter in another place in this Epistle, saying, *That God gave Christ to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all* ‡. Then it seems will Christ himself be compleat, at the Head of his Church, when all his Members shall be united into one Body; and all together partake of his Influences in a very plentiful manner. O Blessed day that! When the Church of Christ shall be deliver'd from its present imperfect, corrupt and divided Estate; when the Man of Sin shall be destroyed; when all the Errors and Corruptions that have by degrees been introduc'd, either in Faith, or Worship, or Manners, shall be rooted out; when its Breaches shall be made up, and its Wounds heal'd; when sound Faith, solid and substantial Piety and Virtue, and universal Charity shall be restor'd; when the *Jews* shall be converted, and the fulness of the *Gentiles* brought in; when with one Heart and one Mouth we shall all glorifie the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, unfeignedly and fervently love one another, and abound in all the Fruits of the Divine Spirit; in fine, when our Lord shall have so thoroughly *cleans'd and sanctified his Church*, as to present it to himself a glorious Church, *not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it may be holy, and without blemish* ||. And Oh that God would be pleas'd to put it into the hearts of all the Pastors of his Church, and of all the Christian Princes of the Earth, to do whatsoever in

* v. 14. † 15. ‡ Eph. 1. 22. || Eph. 5. 26, 27.

them lieth towards the introducing of this happy State! Let me only observe farther on this Head, that we may naturally infer from it, That without all question the Ministry settled by Christ in his Church was not a temporary Institution, but was intended to be perpetual, even till these great things which I have been now mentioning shall be accomplish'd. If there were nothing else in the holy Scriptures to make good this assertion, that Promise of our Saviour, when he gave his Apostles their Commission, would suffice, *Lo I am with you always even to the end of the World.* But lest any should in after-times perversly interpret the *οὐρανῶν αἰὼν* there mention'd, as denoting no more than *the end of that Age*, behold here a farther confirmation of the same truth, in words not to be so evaded. *He hath given Pastors and Teachers for the perfecting of the Saints, &c. till we all come to the Unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, &c.* But I hasten to put an end to this discourse, by laying down two practical Conclusions, by way of Application of the whole; one relating to the weight of the charge committed to those Persons who are consecrated to these sacred Offices; and the other to the just regard that is due to them upon that account.

I. As to the former of these, What secular business can possibly come in competition with that of *perfecting the Saints, the work of the Ministry, and the edifying of the Body of Christ*? Or what design can be of so great importance, as the reducing of all to the *unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man in Christ Jesus*? No trust certainly comparable to that of *taking heed to the flock of Christ, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers, and feeding the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* Did the only-begotten of his Father for us Men and for our Salvation come down from Heaven, taking our Nature upon him, and shedding his precious Blood for the redemption of our Souls? Did he again ascend up into Heaven, that he might by the Influence of his holy Spirit, and the exercise of his Providence, sanctifie and save those souls which he had redeem'd? Hath he given Pastors and Teachers to act under him, and by his Authority; to be Instruments in his hand, and Workers together with him for the reconciling Men to God? Then certainly very great is the charge, and proportionably great is to be the care of those who are thus honourably and usefully employed. This Consideration concerns all in general, who are call'd to any sacred Function; but more especially those whose business it is to direct and govern not only the

* *Matt. 28. 20.*

Members, but also the Inferior Officers of the Church. These are those Servants whom their Lord hath made in especial manner *Rulers over his Household*; Stewards of his Family, and from whom he therefore expects special Fidelity and Diligence in the management of their great trust. They will, they must meet with much contradiction and opposition from the powers of darkness, from evil spirits and from wicked Men, their Lord and Master did so before them, and consequently the greater ought to be their Prudence and Watchfulness, which made St. Paul, in a sense of the weight of the Apostolical charge, say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* But this is their comfort, that their sufficiency is of God, that he who hath sent them hath promised to be *always with them*, and that according to their fidelity and diligence will be their recompence at the great Day.

But I need not insist upon this point, so well understood, and so thoroughly consider'd by those that hear me; who have from a faithful and exemplary discharge of inferior Functions in the Church been worthily advanc'd to higher Stations, and *having been faithful in a few things are made Rulers over many*: I only take leave to stir up your pure Minds by way of remembrance.

II. My other Conclusion from the foregoing Discourse is, That a very great regard is due to those Persons, to whom so considerable a charge is committed, and whose Functions are of so great importance. They are the words of our Lord to his Apostles, when he first sent them forth, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me*; and by consequence, as he himself elsewhere declares to the Seventy, *He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*. The Apostle writing to the Thessalonians exhorts in this serious manner, *We beseech you Brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their Works sake*. Their Persons, it seems, are to be very highly esteem'd and lov'd, on account of their Work. And indeed any Indignity offer'd to their Persons too plainly discovers either a contempt of their Office, or at least no just concern for the Work about which they are employ'd. The Words indeed seem to be spoken in general of all the Pastors and Teachers of Christ's Church; but the Argument here urged holds yet stronger with respect to those who have the principal Oversight and Government of the whole Body. As their Work is greater, so is their Dignity; and the

* Matt. 10. 40. † Luke 10. 16, ‖ 1 Thes. 5. 12, 13. esteem

esteem and love which are due to them ought to bear a proportion to both. 'Tis the Recompense which we owe them for their care and pains in the exercise of their Function; 'tis that which will directly tend to render their Work both delightful and successful. 'Tis the true means of promoting Peace and Unity in the Church of Christ, and with them every other christian Virtue. This Argument runs thro' the whole Discourse of St. Paul, both before and after my Text. that God hath given the several Orders of Ministry in his Church, as for the increasing of Faith and Knowledge, so also for the promoting of Peace and Unity. In this indeed consists the Unity of particular Churches, and consequently this is the Method of promoting the Unity of the whole Body, when private Christians pay a just regard to all that minister in sacred things; and when the Officers of an inferiour Order, pay the like just regard to those of a Superior; when the christian People, as an ancient Father expresses it, *concur with, and the Presbytery are so join'd to their Bishop, as the strings are to an Harp.* Sweet will be the Harmony flowing from such a Conjunction.

And certain this is highly becoming a Church, which reasonably glories in having retain'd the Episcopal Dignity in its Reformation, and in that having the advantage of divers other reformed Churches abroad; in a Church in which the Epistles of St. Ignatius have been so thorowly Vindicated, and the Writings of St. Cyprian are so justly Valued, in both which the Dignity of that Order is so strenuously asserted; in a Church whose Sees, Thanks be to God, are so happily fill'd with Persons who challenge our Esteem and Love upon many other accounts besides that of their Functions, who reflect a new Lustre upon the Character with which they are honour'd, and whose paternal Gentleness and Patience will, 'tis to be hoped, by degrees obtain the desirable issue, of rectifying all mistakes, and conquering all prejudices, of turning the hearts of the Children to their Fathers, and the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just.

May our blessed Lord give us all Grace to see the things which belong to the peace and happiness of this our excellent Church. May he pour forth a Spirit of Charity and Concord upon the Pastors and their Flocks in all the reformed Churches. May he finally cleanse, unite, and perfect his whole Body, that there may be one Sheepfold under one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Eternal Spirit, our great Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, be ascribed all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.

* Ignatius Epist. ad Ephes.

F I N I S.